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UNCLAS MANAMA 000981

SIPDIS

NEA/PPD JDAVIES AND APENDLETON; ECA/PE/V/R/N RREMEIKA,  
LMOODY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OEXC](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: RETURNED IV PARTICIPANT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

1. SUMMARY: In the midst of anti-American sentiments in some segments of Bahraini society, Yousif Mohammed Mahmoud, a participant in an April 2004 International Visitor (IV) program, gave the U.S. a much-needed positive press spin this week. Mr. Mahmoud reflected to the local press on his International Visitor experience and extolled American accomplishments in museum management, while also highlighting the value of these accomplishments to Bahrain. The articles demonstrated the potential influence that visits to the U.S. could have on participants and their home societies. END SUMMARY.

2. On June 20, a half-page article in the Gulf Daily News entitled "Official's US Visit Builds Cultural Bridges" focused on the experience of International Visitor (IV) Mr. Yousif Mohammed Mahmoud. Mr. Mahmoud is the Director of the Bahrain Contemporary Art Association and was the only Arab participant in the "Role of Museums in American Society" IV in April 2004. In the article, he asserted that American communities are keen to present their heritage and culture to the world and that Bahrain, as a whole, can benefit from this experience. He emphasized that following the example of the USG's support for cultural preservation would be a step in the right direction for Bahrain. A similar article was published two weeks ago in the Bahrain Tribune.

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IVs Make a Difference  
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3. Since returning from his visit to the U.S., Mr. Mahmoud has been active in fostering the U.S./Bahraini relationship. In a report written by Mr. Mahmoud to post about his IV experience he asserts, "I am ready to work with you on any program or activities that help to promote our relation for better understanding." He reported to journalists that in the spring of 2005 he is planning to organize a visual art exhibition of American artists and their Bahraini counterparts. As part of the project, he will use his newfound network of colleagues, developed during his trip in the U.S., to nominate participant artists.

4. COMMENT: This article demonstrates the long-term influence that visits to the U.S. can have on IV participants and their home societies. As Mahmoud states, "The impact of this visit on me was completely different from what I had expected as an Arab visitor after 9/11. The American people were so friendly and agreed that we should not judge Islam on the basis of individual fundamentalist activities." Post will continue to stay in close touch with Mr. Mahmoud and our other IV returnees. END COMMENT.

WILLIAMSON